WFDB

THE WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAFBLIND

Web: http://www.wfdb.eu mail: president@wfdb.eu

Subject: Request for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Deafblindness and the Timely Implementation of the Slovenian Legislation

Honourable Members of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia,

The World Federation of the Deafblind (WFDB) is the international organisation representing persons with deafblindness and their organisations worldwide. Its mission is to promote and protect the human rights of persons with deafblindness, support their full and equal participation in society, and ensure that their specific needs and rights are recognised in legislation, policies and services.

WFDB has received an appeal from the Deafblind Association of Slovenia (DLAN), a long-standing full member of our organisation, regarding the proposed postponement of the implementation of Slovenia's Act on the Use of the Language of the Deafblind (ZUJG), which was adopted by the National Assembly on 23 October 2025, with implementation scheduled to begin on 1 January 2027.

Having carefully considered the concerns raised by DLAN, WFDB wishes to express its support for the timely implementation of the Act and respectfully encourages the Slovenian authorities to reconsider the proposed postponement.

The protection and promotion of the rights of persons with deafblindness are central to WFDB's mission and are grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In particular, we wish to emphasise the importance of:

- Article 4(3) – The active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organisations, in decisions affecting them;
- Article 5 – Equality and non-discrimination;
- Article 9 – Accessibility;
- Article 19 – The right to live independently and be included in the community;
- Article 21 – Freedom of expression and access to information;
- Article 24 – The right to inclusive education;
- Article 27 – The right to work and employment;
- Article 29 – Participation in political and public life.

Deafblindness is a unique and distinct disability that requires specialised support and services. It is not simply a combination of deafness and blindness. Rather, it involves a dual sensory impairment, with varying degrees of hearing and vision loss, which creates specific barriers to communication, access to information, orientation, mobility and independent living.

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Persons with deafblindness have diverse profiles and needs. Four commonly recognised categories include:

- Blindness combined with hearing impairment (hard of hearing);
- Low vision combined with hearing impairment (hard of hearing);
- Deafness combined with visual impairment (low vision);
- Deafness combined with blindness.

These different profiles require individually tailored approaches and appropriate combinations of services. In particular, access to qualified **Deafblind interpreters** is essential to ensuring effective communication, access to information, independence and participation in everyday life.

The importance of recognising deafblindness as a distinct disability was further acknowledged by the United Nations General Assembly, which, through Resolution A/RES/79/294 adopted on 16 June 2025, officially proclaimed **27 June as the International Day of Deafblindness**. This historic recognition highlights the specific barriers faced by persons with deafblindness and the importance of specialised support, professional Deafblind Interpreters and their full inclusion in society.

Although persons with deafblindness constitute a relatively small group within the broader disability community, their specific needs must not result in further exclusion. On the contrary, appropriate legislation, specialised services and individualised support are essential to ensuring that persons with deafblindness can exercise their rights on an equal basis with others. Such support must be tailored to their distinct requirements and ensure equal access to opportunities and participation in all aspects of society.

In this regard, we consider it particularly important that the implementation of the Slovenian Act proceeds as originally scheduled. Further postponement would mean that persons with deafblindness would remain unable to exercise rights that have already been recognised by law. We also encourage the Slovenian authorities to ensure that DLAN, as the representative organisation of persons with deafblindness in Slovenia, is actively involved in all discussions and decisions concerning the implementation and future development of these rights.

Respecting the distinct identity and needs of persons with deafblindness also means respecting their right to independent representation and ensuring that their voices are heard directly in decisions affecting their lives.

We therefore respectfully encourage the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the respective ministries to:

1. Reconsider the proposed amendment to postpone the implementation of the Act to ensure that it enters into effect as scheduled, on 1 January 2027.
2. Protect the rights already recognised for persons with deafblindness and ensure access to appropriate, specialised services.
3. Recognise deafblindness as a distinct disability requiring individualised support and services.

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4. Ensure the active participation of DLAN and persons with deafblindness in all decisions concerning their rights, services and representation.

WFDB recognises the importance of ensuring that legislation can be implemented effectively and sustainably. We therefore encourage continued dialogue and cooperation between the Slovenian authorities and DLAN to address any practical challenges while safeguarding the rights and dignity of persons with deafblindness.

We sincerely hope that Slovenia will continue to build upon its important achievements in recognising deafblindness and ensuring equal rights and opportunities for persons with deafblindness in Slovenia.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Respectfully,

Dr. Sanja Tarczay
President
World Federation of the Deafblind (WFDB)